

Can I please be your sweater queen?

by Judy Reid

I'm not sure what qualities the judges were looking for, but my guess is I wouldn't have been picked as sweater queen.

The two hours spent in the Killam Library Archives flew. I was supposed to be researching an article about the history of women in the *Gazette*, complete with dates and names. Unfortunately, I got sidetracked by limericks, '70s tampax ads and queens.

"It's so funny. You should have seen all the photos of beauty queens," I told a friend. "They even had a sweater queen."



"A sweater queen?"

"Yeah."

"Was she chesty?"

"I guess so," I answered, my mind wandering. Maybe my first impression was right after all. Maybe I

hadn't been gullible. Could it be that sweater queens were chosen based on the size and shape of... well... their breasts?

Come on. That's too obvious. The sweater probably refers to a prize from a fraternity or something. I mean, who wouldn't look 'chesty' in one of those '50s torpedo bras? A little extra wiring and you'd have an effective battering ram.

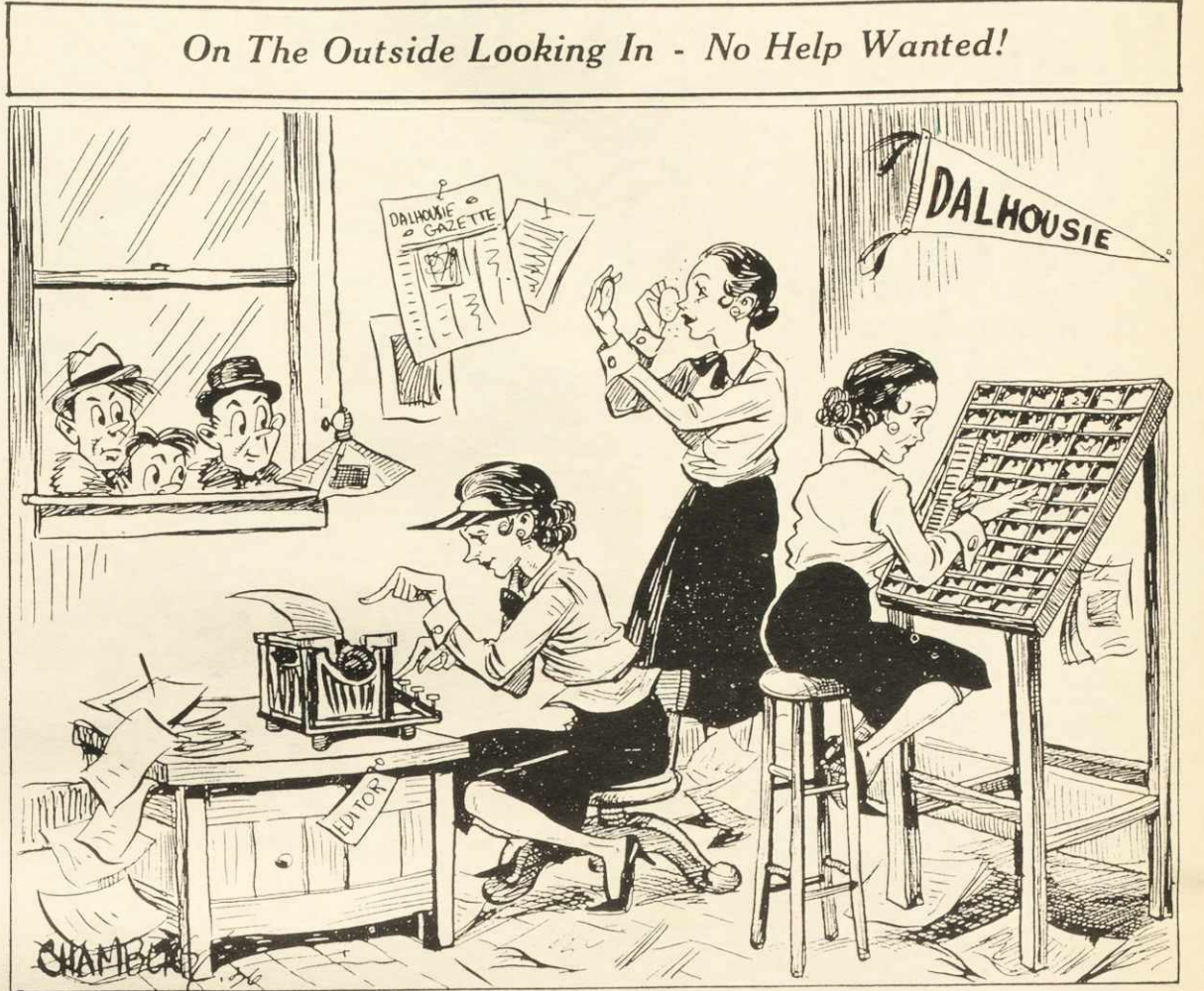
In any case, during the '50s and '60s, the *Gazette* contained more photos of campus queens, law queens, *Gazette* queens and sweater queens than you could... shake a stick at.

As I said, I got a little sidetracked, but I did find a few dates. In 1881, twelve years after the *Dalhousie College Gazette* began publishing, the first woman became a staff member. In 1897, two out of ten names in the contributors box belonged to women. And in 1936, the *Gazette* had an all co-ed (ie. women only) issue.

"That's odd," said a staffer. "Back then they let women write for one issue and today we won't let men write for one issue." She was referring to our International Women's Day Supplement that comes out in March. For the last two years, staff agreed that it should be an all-women's effort.

"What we are trying to do is to bring out a *Gazette* as nearly as possible on the same plan as that used all year by an almost entirely masculine staff," wrote one woman in the November 20, 1936 edition. "We cannot let this opportunity go by without thanking the Editors of the *Gazette* for the chance which they have given the girls this week to bring the paper."

We couldn't be repeating his-



—Drawn by Bob Chambers by special arrangement with The Halifax Chronicle.

tory. Look at their cartoon; skirts, heels and make-up. A cartoon of a 'co-ed' supplement in the '90s would show all women with butch hair cuts and brandishing "I hate men" buttons. One thing hasn't changed. The cartoonist would still get it wrong.

There was the editorial written in the '30s that asked who would you save if your mother and wife were drowning. The answer was your mother. How would you know but that your wife would produce imbeciles or monsters, argued the

editor. "After all, the woods are full of potential wives, but where can we get another mother?"

I photocopied my best finds and brought them over to the *Gazette* office. "Oh my God!", "I can't believe this," and "This is incredible!" rang through the office. We laughed at the backward views and writers of yesteryear and loved it.

I can only hope that in 25 years' time people will look back on the '90s and get as big a laugh.

"Can you believe those models back then?" a future editor of the

Gazette would say, "They look like they haven't eaten in months!"

Maybe they'll even laugh at our need for women's supplements, walk-home services and sexual harassment committees. Chuckling at the past is usually a good indicator of progress.

But maybe I'm being overly optimistic. If history keeps repeating itself, who's to say the editor of 2019 won't also be the winner of that year's sweater queen contest.

Does anyone have an extra torpedo bra lying around?

Dalhousians, won't you help the *Gazette*? Would you help to make it a paper of and for the college. Too long it has been an organ of the faculty - with all due respect to them- rather than of the students. Dalhousians must have some happenings worthy of record; in an enrollment of 300 men and women, there should be some slight literary ability. Perhaps some Sapho lingers in our midst whose lyre is as yet untouched.

Aid us in making the *Gazette* vivid. If you know anything of interest, please inform the editor. If you have any poems or very short stories, send them in. Don't be annoyed if they should be rejected. Lack of space may prevent us from printing them all. Remember the *Gazette* goes to the Boys in the Trenches, and that it should be instrumental in bringing us a little closer to them.

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